



Fire and Spirit

Eberhard
ARNOLD



INNER
LAND



Inner Land

A Guide into the Heart of the Gospel

■ □ □ □ □ **The Inner Life**

The Inner Life

The Heart

Soul and Spirit

□ ■ □ □ □ **The Conscience**

The Conscience and Its Witness

The Conscience and Its Restoration

□ □ ■ □ □ **Experiencing God**

The Experience of God

The Peace of God

□ □ □ ■ □ **Fire and Spirit**

Light and Fire

The Holy Spirit

□ □ □ □ ■ **The Living Word**

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Volume 4

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*Dedicated to my faithful wife,
Emmy Arnold*

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Preface

Born to an academic family in the Prussian city of Königsberg, Eberhard Arnold (1883–1935) received a doctorate in philosophy and became a sought-after writer and speaker in Germany. Yet like thousands of other young Europeans in the turbulent years following World War I, he and his wife, Emmy, were disillusioned by the failure of the establishment – especially the churches – to provide answers to the problems facing society.

In 1920, out of a desire to put into practice the teachings of Jesus, the Arnolds turned their backs on the privileges of middle-class life in Berlin and moved to the village of Sannerz with their five young children. There, with a handful of others, they started an intentional community on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount, drawing inspiration from the early Christians and the sixteenth-century Anabaptists. The community, which supported itself by agriculture and publishing, attracted thousands of visitors and eventually grew into the international movement known as the Bruderhof.

This is a preview. Get the entire book here.

Eberhard Arnold's magnum opus, *Inner Land*, absorbed his energies off and on for most of his adult life. Begun in the months before World War I, the first version of the book was published in 1914 as a patriotic pamphlet for German soldiers titled *War: A Call to Inwardness*. The first version to carry the title *Inner Land* appeared after the war in 1918; Arnold had extensively revised the text in light of his embrace of Christian pacifism. In 1932 Arnold began a new edit, reflecting the influence of religious socialism and his immersion in the writings of the sixteenth-century Radical Reformation, as well as his experiences living in the Sannerz community. Arnold continued to rework the book during the following three years, as he and the community became targets of increasing harassment as opponents of Nazism. The final text, on which this translation is based, was published in 1936. Arnold had died one year earlier as the result of a failed surgery.

This final version of *Inner Land* was not explicitly critical of the Nazi regime. Instead, it attacked the spirits that fed German society's support for Nazism: racism and bigotry, nationalistic fervor, hatred of political enemies, a desire for vengeance, and greed. At the same time, Arnold was not afraid to critique the evils of Bolshevism.

The chapter "Light and Fire," in particular, was a deliberate public statement at a decisive moment in Germany's history. Eberhard Arnold sent Hitler a copy on November 9, 1933. A week later the Gestapo raided the community and ransacked the author's study. After the raid, Eberhard Arnold had two Bruderhof members pack the already printed signatures

of *Inner Land* in watertight metal boxes and bury them at night on the hill behind the community for safekeeping. They later dug up *Inner Land* and smuggled it out of the country, publishing it in Lichtenstein after Eberhard Arnold's death. Emmy Arnold later fulfilled her husband's wish and added marginal Bible references. (Footnotes are added by the editors.)

At first glance, the focus of *Inner Land* seems to be the cultivation of the spiritual life. This would be misleading. Eberhard Arnold writes:

These are times of distress; they do not allow us to retreat just because we are willfully blind to the overwhelming urgency of the tasks that press upon human society. We cannot look for inner detachment in an inner and outer isolation. . . . The only thing that could justify withdrawing into the inner self to escape today's confusing, hectic whirl would be that fruitfulness is enriched by it. It is a question of gaining within, through unity with the eternal powers, that strength of character which is ready to be tested in the stream of the world.

Inner Land, then, calls us not to passivity but to action. It invites us to discover the abundance of a life lived for God. It opens our eyes to the possibilities of that "inner land of the invisible" where "our spirit can find the roots of its strength." Only there, says Eberhard Arnold, will we find the clarity of vision we need to win the daily battle that is life.

The Editors

Light and Fire

Light triumphs over darkness

In every epoch of history there have been terrible calamities and bitter injustices. Faced with the daily suffering of masses of people, the human spirit has proved throughout to be cold, indifferent, and insensitive, no matter what appalling depths the misery reaches. In times of crisis people need a shaking jolt to see the darkness and coldness lowering over them. There is no salvation without judgment upon injustice and unrighteousness. Today's universal and persistent need drives us to look for the cause. Only when the debris is cleared away can the source of help flow freely.

Times of darkness call for faith in light from above. Before this light, all darkness will retreat, just as morning triumphs over every night. The ugliness and horror of darkness and its cold, murderous spirits must penetrate into our consciousness. In utter helplessness, we must be on watch for the hour of redemption, for no human being can bring liberation

Isa. 60:1-2

Rom. 13:12-13

Luke 21:25–28 or relief. Help must come from the other world if all life is not to sink into the cold night of death. Under this crushing burden of the nightmare of darkness, people need to be given a glimpse of the fire descending from above in liberating light.

The light of faith will shine upon darkness and all-pervading cold. Light triumphs over darkness, which is death. Death attacks life. When love grows cold, injustice escalates beyond measure. Darkness hates light, and forced to retreat, it puts up the most violent resistance. The brightness of awakening life is terrifyingly painful to all those who have become strangers to strong light. Accustomed to the darkness all around them, they find the blazing glory of light unbearable torture. It burns in their eyes like fire. The victorious light becomes judgment. The radiant flame of life, which demands love, judges the darkness of unpeace and puts to flight the coldness of injustice.

1 John 1:5–7
Matt. 24:12
John 3:19–20
John 12:46

A few days after Pascal's death,¹ a sheet of paper was found in the lining of his suit. He had kept it on him constantly for eight years as a precious reminder of his deepest experience. On this parchment, the shaking description of an overwhelming enlightenment begins with the solitary word: fire. Jesus brought flames of judgment and of salvation. Jesus wanted to kindle a fire, and his greatest longing was for it to burn. He brought glowing fire to the earth. But the fire he hands over to darkened humankind is not stolen in sacrilegious theft by a second Prometheus from a jealous deity.² God is the giver here. Jesus is

Luke 12:49

1 Blaise Pascal, 1623–1662, French mathematician and theologian.

2 In Greek mythology, Prometheus steals fire from Zeus and gives it to humanity.

the fiery rays of a divine heart that pours out its fire constantly over all people.

God himself gave his fiery brand into the Son's hand through his Spirit. The torch of wrath became a dispenser of life. The flames of judgment became one with life's fire, alive in the liberating and gathering light of love. Jesus knows what this blazing fire meant to the fearful heart from the beginning of history, what trembling and terror it brought upon the erring tribes. He knows that there is no fire without the judgment that consumes what is dying – withered and hardened life.

1 Pet. 1:7

2 Pet. 3:7-10

The fires of heaven and the fires of the deep – flames of lightning falling from heaven and volcanic fire bursting out of the earth, forest giants burning like pillars of fire and fiery missiles from the glowing breath of mountains, lightning that strikes fire with rolling thunder and lava from the quaking earth setting fire to everything in its path – filled early man and all creatures of the earth with shuddering awe. People shook with deadly fear at the immeasurably superior, all-powerful might of this blazing wrath.

Before this fire can show radiant warmth and protecting, uniting power, the flames of its wrath must be revealed as consuming judgment. The flames of God's heart shall cause dread before they disclose their ultimate purpose. The prophet could not help trembling with fear lest he lose his sight in God's heavenly fire by looking with impure eyes at the God of the shining Hosts. God himself says, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live!" We have fallen too deep into demonic darkness to be able to bear the fiery light of the Holy One. Fire lays waste, bringing death

1 Cor. 4:5

Exod. 3:6

Exod. 33:20

1 Tim. 6:16

to all the powers of envy and to all that serves death. Fire consumes. The light judges. It brings death to what is dead: dry wood feeds the fire. Death by fire is not caused by rays from the blazing fire but by the nature of death and darkness – opposition to light and enmity to life.

If eyes are blinded by the sun,
Blame the eyes, blame not the sun.³

Our night-cold nature makes us unable to live in consuming fire. By challenging this cold night, fire breaks in: God's fiery flames are the answer, also, to the call of faith. God descended upon the mountain of Moses in fire. His word is never anything else than fire; his voice flashes flames. Lightning flashes from his heart of burning fire. The Lord on his throne of flaming fire radiates fire from within. He is clothed entirely in flames. His servants and messengers are rays of flame – fire goes out from God. He speaks from the midst of it and his mouth pours forth fire. He sends it down from heaven: devouring fire goes before him. He comes in consuming fire: it is his very nature. He rains down lightning and brimstone. His fury flashes out as fire when his wrath begins. His spirit kindles judgment when he calls for fire. Whoever waits upon God awaits judgment and fire, in which the light of God's salvation shines out.

Exod. 19:18
Ps. 29:7
Dan. 7:9
Deut. 4:36
Ps. 18:8
2 Kings 1:10
Deut. 4:24
Gen. 19:24
Isa. 66:15–16
1 Cor. 3:13

Jesus, our rising sun

Where death and darkness reign, Jesus shines out like the sun after the blackness of tropical night. Paul was blinded when he saw him. Yet he was not to fear the

Matt. 17:2
Acts 9:1–19

³ Angelus Silesius (pseudonym for Johannes Scheffler), 1624–1677, *Cherubinischer Wandersmann* (1657).

light forever. After the light had led Paul to become an apostle of Jesus Christ, he could not remain blind. In three quiet days of earnest prayer, his inner eye was opened to the sunlight of the church of Jesus Christ. Eyes are made for light. Eyes are able to bear light to the degree that life born of light gains ground. The surpassing radiance makes them clear and shining.

Matt. 6:22

The eagle eye of the Plains Indians and of the desert Arabs becomes clear and bright in the shadeless brilliance of their landscape. The more brightness the eye receives, the more radiance and light it can bear. Love to God is love for the light. God's beauty is radiant glory. Light is his garment. Jesus is the light of the world; whoever loves him hungers for his fire. Whoever knows him thirsts for his light, which outshines all suns. Angelus Silesius declared, "You may have the light of the sun; my Jesus is the sun that illuminates my soul."⁴

Mic. 7:8-9

Ps. 104:1-4

John 8:12

It is impossible for us to visualize how far the sun is from the earth it illuminates. Ninety-three million miles are beyond earthly comprehension. What an effect this distant kingdom of fiery life has! How blinding this light is so far from the earth! Against this distant ball of light, our dazzlingly white magnesium flame appears as black as ink. How can we grasp it that the light of Rigel is five thousand times brighter than our sun, or that the rays of Capella send out in one day as much light as the sun in a hundred and thirty days!

What effect the proximity of such sun giants must have is more than we can imagine in human dimensions. In the face of their living energy our little sun dwindles to a candle. The whole universe, as we see

⁴ Angelus Silesius, *Cherubinischer Wandersmann*.

it in the heavens, is an endless ocean of light made up of many millions of these mighty star-suns. Night is to be found only in the shadow made by the dark planets. If we were able to leave our planet completely behind, we would be exposed to the inconceivable power of a divine sea of light!

In Jesus, a fiery light infinitely stronger than all suns put together draws near to the earth. The footsteps of Jesus come near in burning fire. His eyes are blazing flames. His countenance is radiant with the supreme power of all suns. Seven lampstands of golden fire surround him. Seven sun-stars are in his hand. His light casts man to the ground; the

Rev. 1:12-17

apostle falls at his feet as though dead. The living one, however, gave him the resurrecting power of radiant life: he entrusted to the apostle the glorious mystery of the church, the mystery of the kingdom. Jesus is the rising morning star. It shall become clear to us through the nature of the sun-fire what effect the sevenfold starlight of his church has, what power breaks in with the morning light of the coming day of the

2 Sam. 23:4

sun. The Spirit of Unity is the light of God descending from heaven, closely kin in its inmost nature to the glory of all suns.

Therefore, if the mission of Jesus is to be understood, the nature of the sun and of fire has to be understood. Our sun is a central fire world from which our planet gets its life. The sun's force of attraction gathers and holds together all the worlds that surround it. Its heat keeps us from dying of cold. Its warmth awakens life in plants and animals. Without its light, all life would perish in darkness. The tiny fraction of light-energy our planet receives from the

far distant sun is enough to engender and maintain the boundless life we know on the earth. Every manifestation of earth's power, each breath of wind, the water-vapor cycle, the movements of deep-sea fish, and every beat of our heart is the work of the sun. What bracing power it gives body and soul! Without it we fall prey to death.

We could call every organism on earth a sunbeam come to life. Light and warmth sustain all life. It is the energy of light that makes it possible for plants rooted in the earth to make food from air and earth and to maintain life. Only through light can green plant cells carry out this life-maintaining process. And no living creature, no matter how accustomed to darkness, can live without light or without the organisms belonging to the world of light. The sun is the king and heart of the deep as well as of the heights. The sun is the fire that gives life to all that lives.

It is not by chance that God's being and nature in Christ's radiant glory is compared to the sun, to light, and to fire. What Paul states as a fact – that God's invisible being has been perceptible in his works since the creation of the world – was recognized first and foremost in the light of the sun and in the blaze of fire. Here in the works of creation this eternal power and divine greatness are recognizable with particular force and clarity. From time immemorial, sun and fire have appeared to man as uniquely significant images of divine powers.

Rom. 1:19–20

The first humans worshiped sun and fire

Again and again, God the creator, the spirit of the shining, blazing sun, and the controller of storms

and lightning has been worshiped as an all-inclusive oneness. Thus in Egypt the god of the great eternal light was the supreme deity, the creator of all things and the true god of heaven. The light-giving god is the one who reveals and exposes everything. The life-creating god of light is fire that both awakens to life and consumes all that is dead and cold. In India they say of him: “Rays of light proclaim the fire-flashing sun as it rises in splendor to give light to the universe. May the much-to-be desired light of the divine sun awaken our spirit!”⁵ The eye of the sun appeared to men of old as supremely beneficent, as the perceptive, good-creating power. “When the sun’s eye rises in purity in the east, it spreads its network of light over the sky, the earth, and the firmament, and illuminates everything.”⁶

Thus an ancient Brahman prayer says: “Protected by divine power as we gaze at the heavens above the regions of darkness, may we draw near to the deity, to the most radiant light!”⁷ In his letter to the Romans, the apostle quite clearly appreciated the pagan recognition of the nature of God; yet at the same time, with the prophets of the Old Testament, he emphasized the other side very strongly, that in those days this shining book of nature was never read outside the ultimate revelation of light in Christ without very dangerous errors being made – without idolatrous misconstructions. Sun and fire were continually being changed from clear and obvious symbols of God’s nature to supposedly independent deities of sun and

5 Edward Burnett Tylor, *Die Anfänge der Cultur*, vol. 2 (1873).

6 *Rigveda* 1:50, a Hindu hymn to the sun-god Surya.

7 *Rigveda* 1:50.

fire – “lords over all the planet gods” or the dispensers of life itself. The nature of the radiant God of heaven ought to be recognized through his shining creations as infinitely transcending all created things; yet erring humankind all too often exalts the light created by God and makes an idol of it as the highest deity. In this way, unhappy man brings his stifling darkness toward the radiant, created light. When we consider the religious significance of sun and fire, therefore, we must keep pagan idolatry in mind just as much as the dawning intimation of God.

From the earliest times, what was burning and blazing, what was shining and radiant, was seen as divine. In many cultures, the name for God originated from the word that stood for radiant light. God the Father of Heaven was called upon in the old Nordic tongue as “Bright Heaven” in almost the same way as in prophetic truth “the kingdom of heaven” is the kingdom of God. Like the sun, the mighty spirit of the divine light of heaven appears to all people as the life-dispensing and life-sustaining power of the fire of the universe. Through the shining universe, a faint perception of divine unity dawned on fallen man. As a result, he became conscious of the light and unity that alone was to awaken and create the highest form of life. Man implored light and fire to come from heaven. This recognition dawned on the indigenous Americans in the hazy effect of smoke: “Great Spirit, come down and smoke with me as a friend! Fire and earth, smoke with me!”⁸

Ps. 136:4–9

From the very beginnings of humankind, it was clear to all people, however unenlightened, that

⁸ Tylor, *Die Anfänge der Cultur*.

whatever is creative and life-bringing, whatever is good and noble, has radiant warmth and blazing brightness. Down through the ages, people have always been conscious that the warmth of light and love's life and vitality belong together. Light and beauty are one. But light does not shine everywhere. The sun goes down. Night follows day. Throughout the ages people have always known that the radiant, blazing brightness of the good and powerful spirit of light has an opposite – the evil, sinister spirit of cold and darkness. Everything that is tarnished and ugly, that prevents enlightenment and knowledge, and that threatens and kills life is freezing, unredeemed darkness, filled with hidden dangers. Everything that opposes day is night. Everything that keeps back the awakening life of spring is winter's death. Everything that opposes warmth is deadening cold. Everything that opposes unifying love causes disintegration and death. Death threatens life. Between light and darkness there is enmity and warfare to the end.

Eccles. 11:7–8

Man is placed in a tremendous tension between life and death: he is called to burning, life-giving light, but can he overcome or conquer the freezing cold and deadly darkness? Will he survive in the struggle against this very dangerous power, which constantly besets him from within and without? The good spirit of light was revealed from the very beginning as divine, as the leader and champion of life. The evil spirit of darkness was from the very beginning the enemy, the sinister demon of night and death. Between the two stood man, struggling as it were between heaven and hell. This struggle filled his life. Full of alarm, he feared descending night as the cold

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